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GREENBANK COMMUNITY HISTORY

By R. W. Brown

The nearest battle fought in the Greenbank community during the Civil War was Top Alleghany, but the ravages and devastations of the war was felt and realized the same as other communities. No where in the mountains were the Confederate States more solidly supported than in the Greenbank community; in fact there was hardly a Union man found in the whole community. The first year of the war in 1861, Confederate Veterans Company "G" of the Virginia 31st Regiment mustered in the service 53, all volunteers. In the second year of the war 1862, Company G, had 120 soldiers, all six feet tall, except James Hughes and Robert Wolfenbarger; practically all from the Greenbank District.

Company G, was of the famous 31st Regiment, of the 4th Brigade, 3rd Division of Stonewall Jackson's Corps and Army of the Northern Virginia, under command of Robert E. Lee. The Union soldiers admitted that they could always tell when they had to confront the 31st Regiment of Stonewall's Brigade, due to the fact that the impact was always stubborn and irresistible. In the first year of the war after the battles of Phillippi, Laurel Hill and Carricks Ford, the Union forces turned east at Huttonsville, following the Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike; and fought the battles of Greenbrier or Bartow, Baldwin or Top Alleghany Mountain, the battle of Monterey, and the battle of McDowell, all on the Staunton and Parkersburg Pike. Stonewall Jackson turned the course of the Union Army at McDowell and they went by Franklin. When the Confederate Army fell back to the Top Alleghany Mountain they had practically evacuated all the western water at the end of the first year's campaign. The battle of the Top Alleghany mountain was fought on the 13th day of December 1861.

The Union forces were under the command of Gen. R. H. Milroy, and the forces of the Confederates under Gen. W. W. Loring, and Col. Edward Johnson in command. Histories of the Civil war doesn't record but very little concerning the battles of Bartow and Top Alleghany. In fact some histories pass them off as only skirmishes, or a reconnaissance in force.

What comprehensive knowledge we have of the battle of Top Alleghany, is what we have been told by the Confederate soldiers of the community, that were in the battle; and it may be of some interest to some students of history to pass it on.

It will be remembered that the main battle of Bartow was fought Oct. 3, 1861 and then the Confederate Army fell back to the Top Alleghany, and went to building cabins for the winter, and fortifying and building batteries.

The idea of the Confederates in moving to the Top Alleghany was to prevent an army from marching in behind them by the way of the North Fork road and the Greenbank Mountain road. Pickets were placed down the Greenbank road, on the Staunton and Parkersburg Pike and on the North Fork road; the pickets on the

North Fork road stood at Isaac Hartman's sugar camp, which is now on the location of W. N. Snedegar's fishing camp. They soon decided to blockade the North Fork, to be sure that the enemy couldn't get in the rear; and the Greenbank Community, or Company G was on the detail to pilot a Company of soldiers down on the North Fork with the instructions to blockade it in such a tangle that it would take a year a more to cut. If the North Fork, from the mouth of Sutton Run to the Narrows was a forest of the mammoth hemlock trees, of which the soldiers cut down across the road a distance of four miles or more. The soldiers said this was the largest blockade in the war. After the war it took the road hands about two years to cut it out of the road, each man working about four days. The Greenbank Mountain road was also blockaded. The Federal Army left their camp on Cheat on December 12th and marched all day and night to the Top Alleghany, but on that day a company of the Fifty-Second Virginia, had been dispatched to form an ambuscade on the road now between Durbin and Bartow. When the advance of the Federal Army came up they were fired upon by the Confederates, ten men were killed and many were wounded; the Confederates then withdrew and reached Top Alleghany that night. It was in this engagement that the old Confederate soldier, William Slayton was wounded and crept off in the brush to die, but was found two days later by his comrades while searching for missing soldiers; their attention was attracted to a point in the woods by some one singing a good old hymn. When found, they were told he thought he would sing a "Hingham" before he died; but he recovered and lived for many years. According to Federal reports they had 1700 soldiers who marched to the forks of the road at Bartow and then separated. About half of them marched down to the Greenbank road and was piloted through the woods by John Slayton to evade the blockade on the Greenbank Mountain road, and reached the top of Buffalo mountain, west of the battle field; the object was to fall in the rear of the encampment. The battle was scheduled to take place near daylight.

The army that marched up the old Staunton and Parkersburg Pike, with its long and easy grades and graceful curves, stepped off the eight miles to the Top Alleghany much quicker than the army that marched down the Greenbank road, and the near way up what has been since called Slayton's ridge, to the crest of the Buffalo Mountain. The Federal Army left the pike at the big turn where the Top Alleghany School house now stands, and climbed directly up the hill bearing to the south east, the purpose to get in the east side of the camp, expecting the other party to advance up the Buffalo Mountain at any minute; but pickets were out down on the pike and their shots at about 4:30 alarmed the Confederate camp and at once they marched out several companies to meet them, as they approached the top of the mountain. The Federal army waited near the edge of the timber until broad daylight. The

boys in the "Gray" were waiting for them on the top north of the pike, and old log church; little did they know at that time the boys in "blue" were trying to play a game of strategy by coming in the rear of Buffalo mountain.

It will be remembered that the home of John Yeager was in the center of the battle field, and we have it from Mrs. Rachel Sutton who was at the time staying with her uncle, John Yeager, and Mrs. J. O. Beard, a daughter of John Yeager, that they were awakened in the morning before daylight or about dawn, by the loud talking of the soldiers; every soldier seemed to be conversing, and the officers were riding horses back and forth over the battle field giving orders and the soldiers were forming in line of battle, and marching in the direction of the top north of the old log church, and the Georgia and Louisiana regiments, that had their cabins down the hollow south of the pike, were seen marching on the double quick, and filling the breast works on the point of the Buffalo

ridge just back of the Yeager house; all was in a state of excitement and commotion. At a certain stage of the battle in the morning, when the bullets began falling on the Yeager house like hail, the Confederate General ordered the inmates to vacate the house, the Yeager family moved out and went down the Block Run out of danger. When they came back after the battle, they found the house riddled with bullets, one corner was badly damaged by a cannon ball and the house was filled with wounded soldiers; the upstairs was used as hospital for many days after the battle; many of the wounded soldiers died in the house.

When the Federal Army advanced in the open field on the north east of the old church the firing became general, and the battle was on. The Confederate companies that were ordered out to meet the Union army at this point constituted perhaps near a thousand soldiers who held their ground for some time. The old church was used for a commissary or storeroom and the Confederate soldiers

fought hard to hold that particular point, but on the west side of the church they were driven back to take shelter in their log cabins, but finally retreated from them to the south side of the pike. At this stage of the battle one of the Confederate soldiers said he crossed the pike and looked back and saw a Yankee soldier kick down his cabin door and go inside; in a second he came out eating a piece of bread, which was all he had for his own breakfast, in his hurry and retreat he fired at him but didn't know if he hit him or not, but later when the tide of the battle turned he passed by the place and saw a wounded soldier, who begged him for some water, he willingly gave him all he had and placed his own knapsack under his head for a pillow. The Union army had brought some artillery to the top of the ridge and began to throw shot and shell into the Confederate camp, and the Union forces made an overwhelming charge, and the Confederate lines wavered, but speedily regained their position. The Confederate position on Top Alleghany was almost impregnable. These heights on the Buffalo side of the pike were bristling with batteries or forts and entrenchments seemed the hills in every direction, and the batteries were planted in such profusion that no opening presented itself for an easy attack.

When the fog cleared away the Confederate batteries began to belch forth shot and shell in the ranks of the Union army. The opposing lines swayed back and forth in line and curves that were common to each other; but about noon the Union army on the East side of the battle field began to retreat back over the top to the timber line.

The army that was piloted through the woods and up the crest of the Buffalo mountain by John Slayton, completely failed in its purpose of surprising the camp. It appears that the pickets that were placed on duty down the top of Buffalo, when they heard the firing on the East side of the battle field left their post and marched back to camp without notifying their superior officers. When the Union forces came up the Buffalo mountain they marched past the entrenchments on the north side and up near the Lee Battery Captain Anderson of the Lee Battery, thinking it was his own pickets, sprang upon the side of the breast works and called to them to hurry and fall in the trenches; he was shot and instantly died by the Union soldiers. When the Confederates saw that they were between two Union armies they soon realized the danger which threatened them. They knew defeat was inevitable, unless every soldier stood his ground. The trenches were full of soldiers at this point and they sent forth a sheet of flame and death in the ranks of the Union army, and the artillery from the Lee Battery sent shells after them as they began to retreat back down the top. The battle at this point was met with impetuosity, but the day seemed lost to the Federals. This retreat down the top of the Buffalo Mt. known as "Slayton's Retreat" led to the position of the old violin tune by the same name, which was composed by two Confederate soldiers, George B. Sutton and Robert Wolfenbarger, who said they heard him trying to give the command to retreat, but couldn't say anything for stammering. It was reported afterwards, that the delay of this division of the Union army, and failing to make the attack in the rear at the proper time, was due to the fact that they found a barrel or two of good apple cider at the home of N. T. Williams, and wouldn't march a step until it was all consumed and canteens filled. Union armies did not unite at the battle field, but retreated on the same route on which they came.

The Union army make its last stand in the timber line beyond the top which continued until 2:30 when the retreat was sounded, and after a flag of truce was granted to gather up the dead and wounded, the Confederates made their slow and disconcerted way back to Cheat Mountain. At one stage of the battle when the Union forces were driving the Confederates back to the south side of the pike and were pressing the west flank of the Confederates on the Buffalo Mt., the situation looked very serious for the Confederates, and three of the soldiers backed off the battle field and made a bee line down over the old field ridge, and in about an hour reached the Greenbank neighborhood and in their excitement reported the entire camp had been captured, and that they were the only soldiers to escape. The wives and mothers in the Greenbank community that wept and listened to the musketry, and booming of cannons from daylight until 2:30 P. M., were still more vexed when they received the word the entire Confederate camp was captured; but later in the day they received a different message, that the Union army was repulsed and that the Confederates had gained the victory.

The boys that ran away never had any war stories to tell about the Top Alleghany and they would be charged to death when their comrades would "guy" them about being captured on Top Alleghany Mountain.

According to the records, the Federal loss was 20 killed, 107 wounded, 10 missing, total 147. Confederate loss, 20 killed, 98 wounded, 28 missing, total 146.

According to the Confederate reports an army of 1200 Confederates had repulsed an army of 5000. The Federal reports show that they had only 1700 soldiers and the Confederates had 2500. These reports are a matter of record, and the discrepancy is so great that it is difficult to conclude that which is correct. But the Confederate soldiers always claimed that there were more than 20 Federal soldiers killed on the east side of the battle field and more than that number killed on the west side. It was conceded by some of the Union soldiers that the reports of the casualties of the Union army was incorrect, and the list of killed and wounded was much greater than the numbers reported.

The unreasonable thing about the official reports of the battle of the Top Alleghany Mountain is that perhaps 2000 soldiers on each side would stand and shoot at each other from daylight until 2:30 and only 20 on each side would be killed. But it will be remembered that the boys of the "Blue and the Gray" who fought the battle of the Top Alleghany were on ly amateurs in the art of warfare, and had not yet been drilled and learned the military tactics of "Stone wall" Jackson, Lee, Grant, and McClellan. The shooting must have been at random. The lumber companies that cut the trees in the head of Salisbury and down on Palmsy ridge found a number of trees half cut down by cannon ball, which was said to be entirely out of line of battle. One wagon of supplies or equipment was blown in atoms in the pike some where near the Stab camp. One soldier said he saw it fly up in the air and glisten like tin pans.

Community Song Service

There will be community song service at the First Church, Sunday, July 21, at 2:00 o'clock. Everybody is invited.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Kelley and son, Billie Jr., of Alliance, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Newton of Canton, Ohio, returned to their homes Monday, after spending the fourth with their aunt, Mrs. Frank Rock at Marlinton, and other relatives of Pocahontas county. They are better known as Ethel and Grace Loury, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. John Loury of Alliance, Ohio.

Mrs. Wilbur Sharp and children, Bobby and Louise, are spending the week at Bolar Springs, Va.

FOR SALE—One black mare, good worker anywhere you hitch her. See Warwick Ratliff, Marlinton, W. Va.

Shirley Temple fans throughout the world thrilled with pleasure over the recent award to her of a special statuette by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The six-year-old screen sensation (she turned six this month) was singled out by this respected body for making the greatest contribution to pictures last year.

"Our Little Girl", which starts its local engagement next FRIDAY, at the Seneca Theatre, is the first picture Shirley has made since the award. It goes without saying that her numerous fan following takes pride in knowing that their love for the young screen star is backed by the Academy.

Those who are as yet stranger to the Shirley Temple spell should seize this chance to see the work of this indomitable child.

The award came as a surprise and followed the distribution of the golden statuettes voted by Academy members to leading artists, producers, directors, and writers.

Irvin S. Cobb, famous humorist who served as toastmaster, following the announcement which was greeted by an ovation, paid tribute to the talented youngster. He pointed out that she has "given the world one of its greatest gifts. She has made more people happy and made more children laugh than any child her age in the history of the world."

The only other times in the history of Academy that special awards have been voted were to Charles Chaplin for versatility on "City Lights"; to Warner Brothers for pioneering sound with "The Jazz Singer"; to Walt Disney for the creation of Mickey Mouse.

The baby starrer accepted her honors modestly, displaying the famous dimpled smile and bowing as the hundreds of film personalities.

Shirley not only acts but sings in "Our Little Girl." Her supporting cast includes Rosemary Ames, Joel McCrea, Lyle Talbot, Erin O'Brien Moore, Jack Donohue, Poedias Hanford, Gus Van, Margaret Armstrong, Rita Owin, Leonard Carey, J. Farrell MacDonald and Jack Baxley.

The direction is by John Robertson. It is an Edward Butcher production.

Admr's Sale

As Admr. of the estate of the late D. L. Ervin, I will offer for sale the following personal property on the 27th day of July, 1935:

- 1 bay mare, 1 iron grey mare, 7 years old
- 1 riding mare and colt
- 4 cows and calves
- 1 grade hereford yearling bull
- 20 ewes and lambs, 1 stock sheep
- 2 hogs; 1 McCormick reaper
- 1 mowing machine, ploughs, harrows, harness.

Some furniture, bedstead, dresser, desk and other things too numerous to mention.

Terms of sale: All amounts of ten dollars and under, cash on day of sale; over that amount, 4 month's time with interest, note and good security.

Ollie R. Ervin, Admr.

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